OLD DEVIL KNEE

NATHAN IS RANTING AGAIN

Old Devil Knee – from the album *Sinatra Sings for the Over-40*

I look at you and suddenly
Something's stabbing in my knee
Soon it starts torturing me
It's that old cartilage—
That I tore like an ass—
It's that old devil pain in my ass.

You and your glance
Make this moment too hurt to handle.
Stars in the night,
Blazing their light, can't hold a candle
To this razzle-dazzle.

Pain's got me flyin' high and wide,
On a magic carpet ride,
Full of tramadol inside.

Wanna cry, wanna croon,
Wanna scream like a loon—
It's that old devil pain in my knee.

Oh, and how fun it is, Nathan said to no one (as no one was there), that the cartilage he twisted belonged to the right knee—yet the stabs today, uninvited and with sadistic whimsy, came from the left. A duet of pain, playing in stereo.

That old fart Cicero dared to put in the mouth of his cardboard cutout Cato: *"I have known many who bore their old age without complaint, who were not unhappy because passion had unchained them, and who were not scorned by friends. But as regards all such complaints, the blame rests with character, not with age."*

Oh, fuck you, you Roman bastard. Easy to wax Stoic when you've got slaves massaging your calves and amphorae of Falernian wine softening your cartilage.

And even Cicero's own sock puppet sputters back at him: *"Perhaps someone will say old age is easier for you because of wealth, means, and social standing—advantages not shared by many."*

Cato's reply? The eternal Stoic shrug: *Well, it's not all about money.*
To which Nathan adds the chorus of clichés:

- Attractive person: *It's not all about looks.*
- Strong person: *It's not all about strength.*
- Overgifted man: *It's not the size, it's how you use it.*

Get bent, the lot of you.
Let us be old and miserable in peace, limping off-stage with our magic carpet rides of tramadol.

And Cicero keeps handing out pearls of sanctimony: *"The most suitable defenses of old age are the principles and practice of the virtues, which, if cultivated in every period of life, bring forth*

wonderful fruits at the close of a long and busy career."

Right. Live sickly and pious for sixty years so you can croak respectable and smug. Live obedient, die canonized—congratulations, you've won the celestial participation trophy.

Come here, Cicero, Nathan muttered—part menace, part affectionate blasphemy—I'll fuck you sideways and call you Sandy.

Let them preach about virtue while we limp to the bar. We'll raise a glass, pop a tramadol, and celebrate the glorious mess of being human and sore.

One thing the Latin bent actually nailed: *"You see nothing so much like death as sleep."*

Exactly. That's why every morning Nathan pries open his eyes and thinks: *Oh fuck—didn't die again. Another failed night at the great exit exam.*

Death is simple: you just don't wake up.
Waking up is the punishment—realizing you've still got to drag this turd of a world up the hill one more time, Sisyphus with a hangover.

Nathan liked a lot of Camus — the clarity, the stare into the void. But the whole "happy Sisyphus" bit? Nah. If Sisyphus looked smug, Nathan wanted to club the old Algerian on the head, Inglorious Basterds' style.

So what are we supposed to do — find some silver lining in the spicy-burrito-generated diarrhea that is life? It's like being forced to eat at a shitty restaurant: you can't leave, you can't puke, and someone insists you must enjoy the meal. Find at least one dish you like, they say. If you like none, well, you must like one anyway.

Oh do me a favor, I'll pay the gas and the matches, set yourself on fire, will ya?